843 pregnancy are also said to be rare, although miscarriages in later pregnancy up to two or three months before the birth are more numerous because of the continuing heavy work of the mother in the fields. The mother in the agricultural village normally works up to the time for
849 the birth. She eats her normal diet. After birth, the child is placed on a large comforter (futon) beside the mother.

The midwife, after delivery, goes once a day for a week to the mother's home. Her fee is not decided upon before hand, but according
[84L] to custom, averages ¥350 for a normal and ¥500 for a difficult birth,
[965] a low fee probably enforced by the poverty and lack of cash of farm families. (In Naha corresponding fees are said to be ¥1-2000).

853 There is no uniform way of feeding the child after birth. In most cases the child is not breast fed until after the third day due to the fact that mothers have little milk at this time. The first, second, and the third days it is fed warm water with small amounts of white sugar, but this is by no means universal. Some mothers have said that they give the child the breast 4 or 5 hours after birth. In any case, the child very quickly becomes accustomed to feeding at the breast, and this continues for an indeterminate period, depending on
● [862] the mother and the child. It may be for two years, or until the next child comes. In all communities studied, other arrangements are made in the unlikely event that the mother does not have milk of her own. The child may be given evaporated cow's milk or friends or relatives nurse the child. In Minatogawa, if a woman has special duties or takes a trip out of town and cannot take her child with her, she can pay to have it nursed.

843 One belief regarding pregnancy still exists among the old in the Ginoza area. If a new house is being built during the pregnancy of the woman of the house, the cap of the roof is not put on until after the birth has taken place.

2

Birth Customs and Convalescence

852
844
23
[184] In Minatogawa, and to a much lesser extent in Nanashiro, birth customs are related to certain beliefs about the pig pen. These were not known in Uetsuda. In the two southern villages they have virtually disappeared, except among the old. According to a Nanashiro farmer's
[189] wife, the child on the day of its birth is washed, dressed in new clothes, and carried to the pig pen, which is supposed to frighten away evil spirits (bakemono). [See footnote 1, bottom of p. 257--analyst]

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

frowned and tugged at the straps that were straining at her neck muscles. 593

At a still later date, Hanako, with her baby sister strapped to her back, played on the beach. At one point, when all the children were scattered over the beach and no one else was nearby, Hanako edged up to the fieldworker and asked, "Would you like this baby, teacher? Here, take her," she said wearily. Asked why she had changed her mind, the little girl smiled shyly, squirmed uncomfortably for a moment, then whispered, "She's too heavy." Her 3-year-old sister, off in the distance at that point, began to scream and cry at being left so far behind. Hanako turned to look back once, then walked on as the 3-year-old squatted on the sand and screamed to be carried. At that moment her mother appeared to nurse the infant, and Hanako ran to her. She bounded swiftly away to the 3-year-old as the mother started to nurse the baby. Returning a few minutes later with the 3-year-old on her back, Hanako deposited her disgustedly, panting heavily from the weight. "Shall we give baby to teacher, Hanako?" asked the mother, and without any hesitation Hanako this time nodded "Yes." The mother laughed and said, "Hah, she has had enough of her already. When the baby was tiny and cute, she was so eager to carry her and wouldn't give her to you, but they all get tired of babies in time." And with that the mother began to rock the baby back and forth in her arms. Smiling affectionately, she kissed and hugged the cooing infant and murmured, "Nobody wants you, eh?" Because she was an unusually outspoken mother she confided, "I think I have had enough too, here, I give her to you!" She laughed as she continued, "How can I make money, feed and clothe the children when I have to rush back from the mountains to nurse this baby." 857 854 [594]

When the child is about 6 months old, he is subjected to a painful operation which prepares him for the introduction to solid foods. The area around the navel is moxa-cauterized. Nine little brown dots in three rows of three attest to the practice of burning a special kind of grass on the skin in this area to protect the infant from various digestive complications. The child thus treated, the mother will begin to supplement breast feedings with rice water, milky white in appearance, that is spooned out of the boiling pot of rice. Sometime later, before the child is about one, bits of sweet potato and special kinds of fish mashed between the fingers are thrust into the mouth of the infant as he sits on his mother's lap at mealtime. Gradually he is given more and more solid foods until, finally, at the age of 2 he is eating rice, unmashed fish, potatoes and vegetables, but nursing is continued until 853 [751] [262] 862 855 262

862

855 the mother becomes pregnant. Usually, however, weaning is not started in earnest until the mother is three months pregnant.

[262] If the infant has a fever or "bad color," he may be subjected to another painful experience, blood letting. Incisions are made on those parts of the body which are thought to be affected, and blood is drawn and caught in a cup. The area is washed with sake. The mother often suckles the baby and holds him while the grandmother or some other older person performs the operation.

854 757 854 Babies are diapered and swaddled until they are about a year old. For the first two months their wet and soiled diapers are changed frequently; however, as time goes on, less attention is paid to wet diapers, although those soiled from excreta are promptly changed. Infants are checked often during the raw winter days, but because they are bundled so heavily, there is hardly any danger of their contracting colds as their mothers fear. Severe urine burns and annoying diaper rash are more common than colds among young babies.

[164] [855] Although care is taken to keep the infant as clean as possible during the first year of his life, this attitude changes as the child grows older. This is in large part due to the mother's inability to devote much time to her offspring once she has resumed full participation in economics activities. Depending on the season of the year, babies are bathed from every third or fourth day to once a week. They are bathed almost daily during the first two months of their lives as a result of the insistence of the village nurse. Water is heated on the kitchen hearth and poured into a small washpan. Mothers test the warmth of the water by immersing their arms up to the elbows and adding cold or hot water as they see fit. Soap is gently applied either with a soft washcloth or with the hands and rinsed off by splashing. On chilly winter days the bath takes place indoors, but on the hot sunny days it takes place right outside the kitchen door. In drying the baby, the mother places him in a large towel and pats the dampness from his body. She is careful to dry the skin at the joints where rash is likely to erupt. Except for the very poor, all families keep a bottle of talcum powder, which is applied right after the bath. Throughout the bath, the mother talks softly to the baby, smiling and tickling him. The atmosphere of the bath at this time contrasts sharply with that of a later time when the child is 2 and 3 years old.

[594] [744] [855]

863 Although there is hardly any possibility that the infant at this time would be able to smear himself with excreta, the opportunity for doing so is present later when he no longer wears diapers but is still untrained. It rarely happens, as the child is almost constantly watched by a caretaker. One mother reported disgustedly that her infant smeared

copy their behavior. When several mothers and their children are gathered, a mother of a year-old child will coo, "Cute baby" as she strokes a friend's infant's head. She smiles at her child, takes his hand, and repeats the action. A spontaneous response such as this on the part of a year-old child would evoke admiration and voluble praise from the audience. A year and a half old boy became the pride of his mother when he approached all little children with a highly nurturant attitude. He had learned his lesson so well that he considered children of his own age babies because they were smaller than himself. Walking up to them, he would bend down, pat their heads patronizingly, and take their hands to guide them along.

Equally important to the Okinawan parent is a friendly child who is well liked by everyone in the village. A happy, smiling personality is ideal, and it is this wish for the child which leads grandmothers and mothers to perpetuate the custom of burying the afterbirth of a newborn to the accompaniment of laughter and appeals to the spirits to ensure this characteristic. Adults constantly try to get infants to smile by talking and making funny sounds and faces. Even young children approach infants clapping their hands together in an attempt to elicit smiles.

Treatment of children during this initial period discourages expression of self-reliant behavior. As described above, except for rare and very brief intervals during the day, a child is strapped onto someone's back from the time he wakes up in the morning to the time he is put to bed at night. The child is carried about in this fashion from the age of one month until he is almost 2 years old.

*
*
*

Chapter 14

Weaning

When a mother discovers that she is pregnant again, usually about two years after her last delivery, she begins to think of weaning her child. Most mothers nurse the last child until they are about three months

862 [853] [861] into their term, but one mother reported that she nursed her first son until the day before the second was born. Curiously, the determination with which mothers wean contrasts sharply with their very indulgent nurturant handling of the young child, who now encounters a period of withdrawal.

There is a month-long period of what seems, to the observer, indecision and vacillation on the part of the mother. The child is refused the breast, but, if he persists and becomes vociferous in his protests, the mother nurses him. She and others present, however, are no longer solicitous and protective. Derisive comments are directed against him, and, finally, at the end of the month drastic steps are taken. When mothers stated in their interviews that it took four or five days to wean, it usually meant after the final drastic measures were taken.

[513] The child who has slept beside his mother from birth is simply put to sleep with an aunt, grandmother, grandfather, father, or older sibling. In some instances an overnight trip to the city proves extremely convenient for the mother, who leaves the child behind instead of taking him with her as usual. If merely denying the breast does not work, big patches of black paper used for toothaches, backaches, and bruises are pasted on the chest, and the baby is told that the mother is suffering from pain there. "The black paper frightens them and we pretend to wince with pain if the child tries to nurse," report mothers. The black paper proves to be very effective. When this device is not used, another similarly drastic in nature is resorted to. Red pepper or bitter medicine is rubbed into the breast so that the child attempting to suckle is promptly punished with a very unpleasant burning sensation. Frequently a combination of these techniques is applied to wean what a mother terms a very difficult child.

[861] Shaming is a technique that is directed not only to the child but also to the mother. "Ah, shame! Hide the breast," says the mother to the child, or, "Hide, hide, drinking mother's milk!" says she, pulling one end of her blouse flap over the suckling child's head.

On one occasion an old man approached a mother who was nursing her 1-year-old. Immediately the mother pushed the child's head down to acknowledge the elder's presence. The old man, on the other hand, pulled the breast, taking the nipple from the child's mouth. "A big baby! You should not be drinking your mother's milk!" he scolded in a growling voice. As the little girl started to scream and cry, he laughed and, squeezing the breast, squirted milk into her face. The mother laughed with him, then mocked an attack on the old man to pacify the crying child.

Another technique which uses threat to the mother was applied very

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

effectively in the case of a boy who did not respond to red pepper or black paper. The mother described how she tried to fend off the boy one day by simply refusing. As he fussed and cried there was a loud clanging of the pots in the kitchen. The boy stopped crying and looked at the mother who pretended to be very frightened. "Look now! There! It's a big rat coming for your mother's breast, let's hide it, quick, quick!" And with that she buttoned her blouse hurriedly and took the boy in her arms. She laughed as she described how she reminded him thereafter about the rat and how he ran to her and held onto her breasts protectively.

For the child, this whole interim period is a stormy one filled with tantrums, whining, and obstinancy. At no time, however, does the child resort to thumbsucking or other breast substitutes. For older siblings who are his caretakers, this period is a very unpleasant one. Many things displease the child. If his caretaker squats, he screams to have him stand; if he stands, he whines to have him walk. Frequently the sibling caring for him reflects the changing attitude toward the child, and, jiggles him up and down impatiently with a frown and curt comment, "What is it!"

As far as actual nourishment is concerned, weaning should not be so traumatic. Long before weaning commences, when the child is about one, he is given a spoon with which he can learn to feed himself. If families can afford it, they purchase new spoons and special small-sized rice bowls as well as chopsticks for these novices. When the budget is so limited that purchases of new implements are impossible, adult-sized ones are used, and often as not the tablespoon used for cooking and serving proves useful.

At mealtime the entire household sits in the back room, which is next to the kitchen. The head of the family sits nearest to the raised hearth, and the rest of the members form a circle to the left and right of him at a low round or rectangular table. The baby sits on his mother's or grandmother's lap. Usually the mess resulting from this early training period in self-feeding is ignored. The adult holding the novice in his lap occasionally picks up the dropped rice and thrusts small pieces of fish or vegetable into his mouth. Only when he bangs the table excessively with his spoon do his elders mildly chide him. At first the adult holding him will absently reach for the offending arm and slip some food into his mouth. Later they will begin reprimanding him by scowling and glaring at him saying, "Me-me!" (child talk for "eye," meaning "I look at you disapprovingly.") But all this is done in a very gentle way, and often when the novice bursts into tears from fright of the disapproving response, he will be hugged, laughed at, and

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

told, "No, no, no." In this manner the child is taught his early table manners.

As the child approaches the age of 2, the mother begins to praise him for eating without messing but still does not scold him if he fails to do so. He is the center of interest at the table, and his grandparents as well as older siblings encourage him with smiles and expressions of approval. At this time he loses interest in the spoon and is attracted to the chopsticks, which everyone else at the table uses. As he struggles to handle the sticks, the adult holding him sets them in his hand. Holding his hand, with the chopsticks held in the proper position, they guide him a few times; then, as he protests and indicates annoyance at being restrained, they leave him to experiment for himself. This ritual is repeated at each meal, but the child is fed from the adult's chopsticks until he has mastered the technique for himself. The child is not hurried along in his experimentations or learning attempts. The adult praises each fortunate action and quickly slips food into the smiling, open mouth, and the child continues without protest.

Before each meal, people in the village raise their bowls and chopsticks slightly and bow their heads momentarily, murmuring, "Itadakimasu" (a polite signal that the meal is about to be partaken). Similarly, at the conclusion of the meal, the bowl is raised with a brief nod of the head, but this time the expression offered is "Gochiso-sama" (to indicate it was a treat . . . feast). Two very outspoken and good-humored mothers would nurse their young babies, then take the little hands, fold them over each other, palm sides up, gently push the bodies forward, and say, "Gochiso-sama!" Serious training in this aspect of eating etiquette, however, is left until the child is learning to feed himself.

Weaning, then, does not involve a dramatic change in all aspects of the diet of a child, and in many ways may be most traumatic as a withdrawal of the indulgent nurturance of the mother. With the arrival of the new baby, a further step in the emotional weaning takes place. The child is denied his mother's back, for she now has a new baby to tend and eventually to carry.

Treatment of succorance during weaning contrasts sharply with that of the infancy and early childhood period. Unless there is a grandmother or older siblings in the family, this is the time of real deprivation for the child. He is ridiculed, shamed, and punished for demanding to be carried. It is a time marked with temper tantrums, extended periods of crying, and sullenness. Without doubt, this is the most trying stage in the life of a Taira child. Until the words, "You are a big

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

brother or big sister" take effect, he is the most miserable creature alive in the village. 866 862

Weaning from the back often occurs at the same time as weaning from the breast; if not it occurs within six months. While this study was being done, eight children between 18 months and 2 years were weaned from the back as well as from the breast. Temper tantrums in which the child would sit down and scream his head off, hurl dirt and stones at his mother, older siblings, or adults who stopped to have a kind word with him or to ridicule him, and incessant whining were symptomatic of the repercussions of abrupt withdrawal. Sulkiness, stubbornness, and tyrannical behavior, however, are short lived. The child finds that although this kind of behavior brought immediate and rewarding responses in the past, he now faces further withdrawal or punishment as a result. The mother impatiently screams back at him to stop crying, and siblings simply leave him behind to keep up with his own pace or drag him along forcibly and uncomfortably, with threats of punishment if he refuses to cooperate. As if to heap more abuse on deprivation, he finds the newly arrived baby the center of the household and taking his place at his mother's breast. He is encouraged and discouraged by turns. "You are an older brother or an older sister. You do not drink your mother's milk now. And see how big you are and such a good child," now encourage visitors. "Come here, hurry!" scream older siblings or mother when he fails to keep in step with them on walks. For about three months the child's bleary eyes, tear-streaked face, and woebegone expression are unquestionable evidences of the most unhappy interval of his childhood.

In an attempt to continue "ruling" the family, he goes into frequent rages. He demands anything and everything in sight, concentrating on the breast and on being carried. Desperately he screams and cries. Finally he sits on the ground and refuses to move. If his caretaker does not pick him up at that point, he will simply lie prone and cry hysterically. Usually adults scream back at him and start walking away, whereupon the child quickly picks himself off the ground and runs after the retreating caretaker. In this way the child's control is broken. Furthermore, he is ridiculed, shamed and scolded for his "babyish" behavior. Only the grandmother, with whom he sleeps at night, responds to his dominating behavior. During the day, he whines, wheedles, and makes numerous demands on her. [513]

Obviously family structure determines in part the severity of the deprivation. The child who lives in a household with a grandmother and perhaps older siblings will have someone to indulge him. The 866 887 603

went home and hysterically reported the incident to her family. The mother, meanwhile, laughed and told her boy, "Just like your grandmother, can't stand to hear you cry even when you are not hurt!" She then went on to say that both she and her husband ignore the boy's crying in situations where he could help himself, but the boy's grandmother immediately runs to soothe and aid him. Generally it may be said that in extended households, grandmothers tend to prolong the dependence period and discourage independence and responsibility.

The relationship between grandfather and grandchild is more restrained. Although grandfathers may be seen carrying children or doing things for them, there is always a discreet distance between them, the result of early training in respect and deference to male elders. Children do not tease their grandfathers as they do their grandmothers. Older boys, in their late teens, may carry on a superficial joking relationship with their grandfathers, but they must be careful not to show disrespect. The male elders in turn show greater affection for the male child than for the female. When both grandparents are living in the house, the child, whether male or female, is more likely to direct his succorant appeals to grandmother rather than grandfather.*

Mothers, themselves, are often not too consistent in their training for independence. They will feel sorry for the child when he is first weaned and allow him to stay close to them until the birth of the next sibling. On the other hand, they will encourage the little 2-year-olds to imitate older girls and boys, particularly in their baby-tending role. A mother will strap a "doll" on her daughter or son's back. The "dolls" are usually rolled blankets or jackets, for real dolls are expensive and rarely bought in the village. Older children and adults do not fail to comment to a child carrying such a burden. They praise him for being such a good caretaker; they pretend to see the "baby" sleeping and report this to him. If the strapping becomes loose, they call to him and reassemble the "baby" and the pinning. The doll is never played with or manipulated. Thus the 2-year-old gets praised for emulation of the responsible and nurturant behavior expected of older siblings.

Perhaps it is this role training that explains in part the absence of aggression toward the newborn sibling, which might well be expected with such a short interval between weaning from the breast and back and the birth of the next child. The fieldworker did not observe one instance of such hostility. If there is any hostility expressed, it is against the mother in outbursts of temper and against those who ridicule or try to comfort the displaced child. The grandmother's aggressive actions against the mother may encourage the child in this behavior

* Only 4 out of 24 sample children lived in the same house with a grandfather.